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Ford Writes to Clear Bush

By Norman Kempster

Washington Star Staff Writer

George Bush has become the second vice presidential drop-out of the 1976 election.

President Ford ruled Bush off the ticket yesterday, paying the price demanded by several members of the Senate Armed Services committee for approval of his appointment to head the CIA.

The committee's 12-4 vote sent Bush's nomination to the Senate floor for confirmation action after Congress returns next month from its holiday recess.

After Bush refused to take himself out of the 1976 picture during hearings earlier in the week, the committee passed the word to the White House that the nomination was in deep trouble.

FORD CALLED Bush to a meeting Wednesday night, where the decision was made to sacrifice

whatever vice presidential prospects he may have had.

"Ambassador Bush and I agree that the nation's immediate foreign intelligence needs must take precedence over other considerations and there should be continuity in the CIA leadership," Ford said in a letter to Chairman John Stennis, D-Miss.

"Therefore, if Ambassador Bush is confirmed by the Senate as director of central intelligence, I will not consider him as my vice presidential running mate in 1976."

Opposition to Bush had centered on complaints that he would be subject to political manipulation if the prospect of the vice presidency was dangled in front of him.

Sources said the Armed Services Committee vote probably would have been an 8-8 tie if Bush had not been taken out of vice presidential consideration.

Vice President Nelson

Rockefeller became the first Republican figure to withdraw from No. 2 spot on the 1976 ticket when he announced last month that he was removing himself from consideration.

BUSH RESIGNED from the post as U.S. envoy to China to accept the CIA appointment. Previously, he was a Republican congressman from Texas, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and Republican national chairman.

It was the GOP national chairmanship, which Bush held during two hectic years as Richard M. Nixon's presidency unraveled, that generated most of the criticism of the CIA appointment.

Ford apparently hopes that Bush can perform public relations miracles at Langley, refurbishing the image of the CIA, which was tarnished by disclosures of assassination plots and other abuses.